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## **Journal of European Baptist Studies**

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## Editorial

The Consortium of European Baptist Theological Schools (CEBTS - [www.cebts.eu](http://www.cebts.eu)) is an important network bringing together academic theological institutions which resource baptistic communities in Europe and the Middle East. Every few years we gather together to discuss common interests and mutual resourcing and to debate papers delivered on topics relevant to theological and missiological education in Europe and the Middle East today. The 2010 meeting, hosted by the Northern Baptist Learning Community, took place at Luther King House in Manchester had the expected feast of papers delivered on topics relevant to theological and missiological education in Europe and the Middle East today.

From amongst the wealth of theological reflection and insight presented at the CEBTS Forum we offer you two papers which should stimulate your thinking. We are privileged to have an introduction to the outstanding German missiologist, Theo Sundermeier. Though the doyen of missiological thinking in the German speaking world, he is almost unknown in the Anglo Saxon world and we are grateful to our colleague, Michael Kisskalt, Professor of Missiology at Elstal, for opening up Sundermeier's concept of 'convivence' to us. Then Wout Huizing from our seminary in the Netherlands explores the approach of Dutch Baptists to coaching theological students in the field. Both these papers have a relevance to the work of theological formation for ministry in Europe today, but we anticipate their insights will have a much wider audience and relevance.

Our third article is by John Weaver, who retires as Principal of our South Wales Baptist College next summer. John had a first career in geology, later coming to theology and ministry, and his work on the frontier of science and theology is noted amongst us. IBTS seeks to work assiduously in the area of the theology of creation care and its practical outpouring, and we have been immensely grateful to John for his support of our concerns. Here we offer to a wider public a paper he delivered at a post graduate seminar during the annual IBTS environment month. It is worthy of careful attention as we react to the aftermath of the latest Cancun summit on climate change and environmental concerns.

**The Revd Dr Keith G Jones**  
Rector, IBTS

## **Mission as *Convivence* – Life Sharing and Mutual Learning in Mission Inspirations from German missiology<sup>1</sup>**

Michael Kisskalt

The mutuality of life emerges as an essential key element of various disciplines in the social sciences. A real and happy life in the Christian sense, also in Christian education, means sharing one's life with others. This truth and experience is very present in German mission theology today. 'Learning in Community' matters, not only in education and in theological education but also in mission. The German missiologist, Theo Sundermeier,<sup>2</sup> who has been the most influential missiologist in Germany over the past twenty years, accentuated this aspect of mission by defining it as 'Convivence'. From 1964 to 1974 he served as a theological teacher in Southern Africa, and thereafter he became Professor of Mission and Religions, firstly, at the University in Bochum and then at the Protestant Faculty of the University of Heidelberg from 1983 to 2006. Sundermeier is now retired but he is still very involved in missiological issues, speaking, writing and dialoguing with many different peoples and cultures. Many young professors in mission and religion at German universities have developed within his post-graduate doctoral programmes. One of the results of his missiological research is the new mission paradigm of *Convivence*.

This paper tries to communicate the essential missiological terms of Sundermeier into the Anglo-Saxon theological context. Sundermeier succeeded in describing the present experiences and ways of mission by using the term *Convivence*. *Convivence* stands for a new paradigm in missiology. It does not simply describe a new method, but also a new attitude of mission, with huge consequences for its practice.

Sundermeier learnt about *Convivence* in the Latin-American context. He was impressed by the Christian life of grassroot churches in these

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<sup>1</sup> Paper delivered at the European Baptist Theological Teachers' Conference, 16 – 19 July 2010, Manchester, UK.

<sup>2</sup> Publications (German): *Konvivenz und Differenz. Studien zu einer verstehenden Missionswissenschaft* (Anlässlich seines 60. Geburtstages, FS hg. v. Volker Küster, Erlangen, 1995) (contains the foundational essay concerning *Convivence*); *Den Fremden verstehen. Eine praktische Hermeneutik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996) [what does it mean to cross one's borders to the other: Sundermeiers approach of 'Xenology']; *Was ist Religion? Religionswissenschaft im theologischen Kontext* (Ein Studienbuch, Theologische Bücherei 96, Gütersloh, 1999) (topic of primary and secondary religions). Publications (English): *Convivence. The concept and origin*, in: *Scriptura*, Journal of Bible and Theology in Southern Africa. Special issue, 1992, pp. 68–80; *Theology of Mission*; in: *Dictionary of Mission: Theology, History, Perspectives*, eds. Sundermeier/Müller/Bevans (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2006), p. 429-450.

impoverished areas. He takes their ways of surviving and sharing their life and faith as a pattern for his mission model. In this context, he learnt the Spanish word ‘convivencia’, which describes their ways of living together as neighbours, helping each other in their needs, and working together against unjust politico-economical structures in order to ameliorate their situation. For example, they succeeded in convincing the governor of their district to construct ‘waste water ditches’ in their streets in order to evacuate all sorts of dirty water to limit terrible diseases. Often the churches in these districts were catholic, but the Roman Catholic Church did not have enough priests to cover the sacramental life of these churches, so Christians had to find their own ways of surviving. Without the skilled ecclesial interpreter of the texts, they had to read and interpret the Bible for themselves, explaining their understandings of the texts to each other. One result of this situation was the birth within the grassroot churches in Latin America of so-called ‘Liberation Theology’. Sundermeier was not interested primarily in this theology but in the experience of people, of Christians, who formed their life and mission in a convivial manner.

Arising from this experience, Sundermeier defined Mission as ‘Convivence’, meaning to share life in a triple sense: to help each other, to learn from one another and to celebrate/feast together.<sup>3</sup>

## **1. To help each other**

There is no hierarchy between oneself and others. Everyone has something to share, is able to help, and everyone is somehow in need and needs the help the gifts and the possibilities of their neighbour. This mutual action of giving and receiving is not only limited to members of the Christian community but to all people living in the neighbourhood. Consequently, for Christians, mission means spending time with neighbours, offering help but also asking for their support.

## **2. To learn from one another**

The roles of teacher and learner are not fixed; they change from time to time – or both may be teachers and learners at the same time. In grassroot Roman Catholic churches, the priest is not only the teacher of the doctrine of the Church; he is first called to be part of the community of the local church where everyone has to contribute something for the better understanding of biblical texts or questions of ethics and doctrine. Surely, the priest has a particular function as someone who has been educated in theological thinking and understanding, but Christian ‘folk’ have also received the Holy Spirit to understand and to communicate holy matters.

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<sup>3</sup> In German: miteinander leben: einander helfen, voneinander lernen, miteinander feiern.

Sundermeier especially refers to Paolo Freire,<sup>4</sup> the pedagogue of the Latin American liberation movement. Freire writes about the poor who discover their roles as subjects in history. The poor do not only receive help and education and the right understanding of things from the rich and intellectual. They are no longer simply ruled and directed by the educated and rich, but they educate themselves, they form their lives themselves. In living together, in sharing life and knowledge and capacities, the poor develop wisdom and strength to live their own lives and to bring their lives forward. Convivence means to learn from one another: everyone has something to teach, everyone has something to learn. The missionary will share his/her knowledge of the Gospel and his/her faith experiences with others, but at the same time, will learn from others something new about God because his/her neighbour, being a Christian or not, is also created in the image of God.

Sundermeier adds a third element of Life and Mission in *Convivence*...

### **3. To celebrate together: a joint festival<sup>5</sup>**

The communitarian life of the neighbourhood communities in Latin American slums means to celebrate life, to have common times of festivals. People living in the southern parts of the world have a special gene in their blood that enables them to celebrate festivals. Sundermeier refers to some sociologists, psychologists and philosophers who describe the values of a festival: during the time of the festival, daily life, with all its problems, stops for a moment, to continue some moments later with more vitality and vigour. Festivals provide a special atmosphere of freedom; they create a particular space for new ways of encounter that even enemies might meet in a new way when they respect the rules of the festival. The main rule in this context is that you are there as a participant of the festival: you don't play the role you play in daily life; nor do the other participants – they are there to celebrate together, to drink and to eat together. In the openness and, at the same time, the protected space of the festival, social differences become less relevant. The mutual and equal encounter of different people is possible in the context of the festival.

My **personal experience** as a missionary in **Cameroon** corresponds to this experience. I was so impressed by the festival mentality of the Cameroonians. To be together, to celebrate feasts, was more important than to sit together in sessions and produce a paper solution. The reality was that

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<sup>4</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970).

<sup>5</sup> To translate the German expression 'miteinander feiern' into adequate English is difficult, because all English expressions contain certain notions which are subsumed in the German expression 'Feste feiern'.

during their celebrations, in drinking and eating together, they also discussed their problems and, in the special atmosphere of the festival, they found ways to move forward or even find solutions to their problems. As I served as a missionary, I discovered the special, or even 'divine' value of the festival when being together with my Cameroonian brothers and sisters.

The festivals in Cameroon had certain rules. In principle, the structures of society had to be respected during the feast. As the leading pastor of the region, Director of the Theological Seminary, and as a European missionary, I always had my place among the political, economic and religious leaders of the district, but this hierarchical placing of people became less formal during the feast. After the meal, you saw the mayor of the town sitting beside the farmers, and the impoverished mother with five children sitting in the leather chair beside the local pastor. The following morning, after the feast, all hierarchical roles were back in place; society needs certain hierarchies and responsibilities, but it also needs the moments when these hierarchies are less important, and the flow of life runs differently.

This is the special point in the *Convivence*-missiology of Sundermeier, that all human hierarchy is laid aside in the situation of a festival. A new kind of communication becomes possible. According to its communication rules, everyone can communicate with everyone else, all being on an equal footing. This sort of communication reflects very well the anthropology of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The critical question here is, in what sense does the atmosphere of the festival bring social change in daily living outwith the festival?

Thus, life and mission as convivence, according to Theo Sundermeier, means sharing life in helping each other, learning from one another and celebrating together.

## **Not 'Church for people' but 'Church with people'!**

With this new understanding of Christian life and mission, Sundermeier wants to introduce a paradigm shift in missiology. In the second half of the twentieth century it was, especially, the wording of Dietrich Bonhoeffer which was directing mission theology: 'Church is only church if it is the church for others!'<sup>6</sup> What does it mean to be the Church for others? The more conservative missiologists say that this means to give witness to the word of God, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Missiologists in the stream of the Geneva ecumenical movement put the stress on helping people in their

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<sup>6</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (London: SCM Press, 1953).



present situation. The result of this latter theology was to foster the social commitment of churches and to engage in development projects all across the world; whereas the conclusions of the former, more conservative missiological philosophy was to send preachers and evangelists throughout the world.

The mistake of both movements was, according to Sundermeier, that they saw themselves as superior to the people around them. They were the witnesses, and the others were those who had to listen. They were the helpers and the others were those who needed and received help. Both sorts of mission movements ignored the fact that the Mission of God is far more than their mission activities. God was already present among people long before the arrival of the missionary and the development agent. Sundermeier feels that both mission movements find themselves in a dead-end-street. In many regions people are ready to convert to Jesus, when the representatives of Jesus take them seriously; if the evangelists are ready to listen to their stories with God; if the helpers are ready to help them with the intention that as soon as possible they may help themselves. According to Sundermeier, Christians accomplish their mission in the right way when they leave behind the concept of the missionary as the subject of their mission and the others as the object of our mission. We are all, at one and the same time, objects and subjects, of the Mission of God.

I would like to illustrate this thesis with my **own experiences and examples**. When I was pastor of the Baptist Church of Charlottenburg in the centre of Berlin, we took care of homeless people in the city. We opened our church rooms for them from Monday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. We offered coffee and tea, water and juice and something to eat. In the middle of the morning, we had a short biblical meditation, and everyone who wanted to listen stayed, and those who didn't want to listen were free to leave for a while. These needy people were so open and engaged because we encouraged them not only to sit there and to receive help but also to engage themselves, in the kitchen or in other activities of the church. Even during the meditation time, I encouraged them to offer their opinion or to tell something of their experiences as befitting the biblical text. Sometimes, their contributions were irritating, but often they shared something which helped to better understand the biblical text. I, as pastor, learnt a lot from their contributions and questions. Through their contributions, they built bridges between the biblical texts and their lives, bridges which I did not understand as a middle-class man. One result of this social work was a series of baptisms in our church. It is interesting that those people in the 'social coffee room' wanted to be baptised and had begun to engage as volunteers in this work. In their small and often unseen encounters, they

discovered themselves as subjects of their life. First they came to receive help from us, but then they took the risk to engage themselves. We opened space for this engagement, step by step. They took part in our co-workers' meetings. They felt they belonged to our ministry before being baptised, because they felt our respect; they felt that we honoured them somehow. And many were overwhelmed by our attitude, because until then they had gone through many experiences of shame and dishonour in their status as homeless people. People opened up to the Gospel and we discovered God in a fresh new way by these experiences of mission in the spirit of *Convivence*.

## Biblical foundations of *Convivence*

Sundermeier presents a number of biblical references which support his missiological approach.

His first reference in the Old Testament is that of **Gen.12**: the story of **Abraham** who arrived in Canaan and built his altar beside the altar of the Canaanites, at the oak of Moreh. He did not destroy this pagan altar. He respected it, placing his own confessional altar beside it. In the encounter with the Canaanite people, Abraham does not deny his faith, assimilating to his environment, neither does he force the Canaanites to accept his faith, rejecting his environment. As the story progresses, Abraham looks for ways of cohabitation with the Canaanites. It was finally in his encounter (Gen. 14.17ff) with the 'pagan' King of Salem, Melchisedec, that Abraham began to know the God of his ancestors as 'God the Highest' (el-eljon). Abraham lived together with the Canaanites and through this experience, his faith horizon broadened, learning the universal character of what he had previously thought of as a tribal God. Sundermeier calls this ability of Abraham to maintain his faith in a strange context; to confess it in public, but nevertheless to respect the stranger; to be open to communication and new experiences with God, and to look for ways of communitarian life, the 'Abraham Mission Model'. The 'Abraham Mission Model' is, for Sundermeier, synonymous with *Convivence*.

Sundermeier finds another biblical reference in the book of the prophet **Hosea**. In some prophetic traditions of the Old Testament, the cult of Baal is denounced as hostile to faith in the God of Israel. However, the prophet Hosea feels challenged by God to a syncretistic lifestyle: he has to marry a temple prostitute of the Baal cult. At the same time, according to results of the sciences of religion, the book of Hosea is the oldest religious text in Israel which speaks of God in terms of love: 'I led them in the cords of compassion, with the bands of love!' (Hosea 11.4). Even through the

strange and hostile religion of Baal, the prophet learnt something new about God, that he is not only the God of history but also the God of the present, bound together with his people by love.

Sundermeier's discoveries in the Old Testament concerning the topic of 'convivence' are quite challenging. Faith in the Old Testament is not only apologetic, not only a battle for the right faith, but also a smooth development of faith convictions, a kind of sensitive revelation history for the people of God in the encounter with the surrounding religions. The representatives of the people of God learn of God anew by the open encounter with surrounding adherents of other religions. On the other hand, you also find passages in the Old Testament which are quite apologetic, defending the faith in the God of the Fathers against all kinds of relativisation.

Therefore, Sundermeier has chosen quite unilaterally his first testament arguments for the convivence paradigm; you really find these convivial ways of godly revelation in the history of Israel.

The biblical arguments for 'convivence', based in the New Testament, are even stronger.

First, there is the basic revelation of God in Jesus Christ (**Incarnation**) as the brother of men and women. In Jesus Christ, God is incarnated into human nature bringing his salvation; not as a doctrine of truth hanging above human reality. In Jesus, God becomes one with we human beings. This is the strongest biblical argument for convivence theology. In Jesus, God turns upside down all hierarchical relationships between himself and his creatures. God encounters human life at eye level, the only level where humans can support the presence of God. Secondly, you also find this incarnation movement of God in the life of Jesus, when he shares his daily life with his disciples, with men and women, with the just and with sinners. He is sitting at the table with the sinners; he drinks and eats with them. In his ministry, he is serving people, but he also permits others to serve him.<sup>7</sup>

Being reassured by the biblical foundation of convivence theology, Sundermeier develops some conclusions concerning the present challenges for churches worldwide.

With the attitude of convivence, there are many ecological challenges facing the church. Humankind should live with 'mother earth' in a kind of symbiotic relationship.

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<sup>7</sup> John 13: Jesus washes the feet of his disciples; Mark 14.3-9: woman washing the feet of Jesus.

In regard to interreligious dialogue, Christians should be open to learn in the dialogical encounter with adherents of other faiths, but they should do it without denying their own faith identity. The result of convivence is not syncretism but the respectful encounter of different identities. People of different religious convictions should be open to learn from each other, to help each other and to participate mutually at their various festivals.

As we view the challenges in world mission and development, mission partners cooperating in the spirit of convivence respect and rely on each other. Together, on the same level, they can develop projects which are situated, not only in the south, but also in the north of Christendom.

## **A resumé**

Two aspects of the *convivence* theology of Sundermeier are essential.

First, that of mutuality. All participants in mission or development projects, in evangelism and social projects, are active and passive, subjects and objects of the event. The Christian attitude is to feel superior to others but this does not correspond to the understanding of the human being as being in the image of God and to the reality of the humanness of Christians, of their needs and limitations.

Secondly, is that of the dynamic relationship between identity and openness. With his missiological approach, Sundermeier hopes to overcome the conflict between the so-called 'evangelicals' and the so-called 'ecumenicals'. If Christians are ready to get involved in the missional *convivence* of God, they will also be open to each other, to speak to each other, and spend time with each other. In their missionary engagement, they can stand up for their Christian identity without denying their convictions, but at the same time be open to dialogue with those whose lives have different convictions or religions: evangelism and dialogue do not contradict each other any longer.

## **Conclusions in a Baptist perspective for mission and for theological education**

In principle, the mission theory of *convivence* is quite near to fundamental Baptist convictions. *Convivence* describes the ideal Baptist understanding of church. According to Baptist ecclesiology, the highest authority in the human and Christian search for truth is not a personal institution like the Pope in the Roman-Catholic tradition, neither a certain caste of theological specialists who define theological truth as in the Reformed or Lutheran

traditions. The highest authority in the Baptist sense is the community of sisters and brothers in the Church. Theologically educated people have their place, their role, their voice within the churches, but ultimately it is the whole of the Christian fellowship which has to think through and seek the view of God into the present challenges. The Baptist way to seek the truth is to open up the Bible and discuss the different interpretations in the community of the Bible readers. Baptist identity<sup>8</sup> is clearly not hierarchical: Baptists orientate with the process in common discussion and prayer.

The challenge for Baptists, in the way of *convivence*, might be to open up such an attitude towards people within their societies. Surely, you should differentiate between the believers who have received the Spirit of God and the non-believers without the Holy Spirit. But the Mission of God is bigger than human 'spiritual' limits. In the Bible, and in history, God has acted through the people of God and in and by pagan emperors, even directly by his Spirit (Acts 10). It may be true that you can only see the truth of God in life and history by reading the Holy Word, and Baptist churches lose their dynamic when they stop the common reading of the Bible. But the Spirit of God, the spirit of creation, is also moving outside of our churches into the world. It is true, that, in our societies, you not only find the light in the Spirit of Creation, but also in the shadow of the sinfulness of the world. You need the gift of the 'differentiation of the Spirits', but if the goal is to bring the gospel into the different contexts of people, Baptists should open up their convivial attitude, being realised in their community life and communication, even when they encounter people from outside the church. The Christian testimony will find its way between the openness of dialogue and its apologetic and missionary intention.

So, we might list the **conclusions for Baptist mission** as follows:

1. Mission in obedience to Jesus means to become sister and brother of men and women, to live in solidarity with them, enculturated into their life experience and to witness to the Gospel in the midst of life.
2. The Church engaged in mission, according to the mission of Jesus, sends its members as Christians into their daily life, looking for ways of *convivence* in its environment.
3. The Church will look at people with the eyes of Jesus: they are not objects of Christian mission, but images of God, beloved by him; and Christians meet them in the spirit of respect and love, being open to learn something from them about God and life.

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<sup>8</sup> This is true at least for Baptists in the Western culture. But even African Baptists, who, according to their cultures, are more hierarchically organised, have developed typical Baptist grassroot ways to resolve their problems.

4. Mission in the spirit of *convivence* is possible if the missionary is conscious of his/her Christian identity, having the possibility to live and express that identity in missionary testimony.

Reflecting on issues of ministerial formation, we might postulate the following **consequences for theological education**:

1. Theological education, in the light of *convivence*, will not only broach the issue of the sinfulness of the world, but also the issue of the presence of God in the world.
2. Already during theological education, you offer space and time for students to develop their own identity processes. If you are aware of your own faith processes, later, in the pastoral and missionary ministry, you might concede these processes also to other people.
3. Theological education should practice convivence in and alongside its courses. It should always be clear, that the professors are also learners, and the students also teachers.
4. In order to learn to bring together convictional identity and life in its diversity, theological seminaries might develop structures and space where students and their theological teachers can share their lives with each other in addition to the theological content.

**Michael Kisskalt** is Professor of Missiologie at the Theological Seminary, Elstal/Berlin.

## **Coaching Students in the Field: Pitfalls and Challenges<sup>1</sup>**

Wout Huizing

On ‘You Tube’ you can find an awareness test.<sup>2</sup> You have to count how many times a basketball-team in white passes the ball. The right answer is 13. But it is an awareness test, because there is something else to see – a moonwalking bear. Most people do not see the bear because they are concentrating on counting the number of times the ball is passed from person to person. The question is always: What do you see? What we see is often what we are asked to see or what we want to know and measure. If we are coaching, what do we want to see the students doing or what do we want them to know? Do we look for the right things?

In the Netherlands (and I suppose at other seminaries in Europe) we have formulated several competences for students to achieve whilst they are studying at the Dutch Seminary, such as:

1. To be or to become a balanced person, able to integrate a personal spirituality, based on the Bible and in relationship with the Church of Christ – aware of his/her vocation to ministry – with a professional attitude, and able to reflect on attitude, identity and what he/she is doing in (work) situations and thus developing personally and professionally.
2. To know how to relate the actual world of experiences of church members with the Bible and our Christian tradition. To bring the knowledge of the Bible in contact with the life of the church.
3. To be able to support, comfort, challenge, guide and communicate with individuals, pairs, families and groups in coping with religious and life questions in very diverse situations.
4. To be able to give content to religious worship and appropriate rituals for the congregation.
5. To be able to communicate their own religious tradition with other people, genuinely and enthusiastically, and to be present in an open and vulnerable way within society; and also in a cross-cultural context.

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<sup>1</sup> Paper delivered at the European Baptist Theological Teachers’ Conference, 16 – 19 July 2010, Manchester, UK.

<sup>2</sup> [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com), funny ad awareness test.

6. To have pedagogical and didactic qualities to create a powerful learning environment for individuals and groups and to facilitate processes of learning and change within the body of Christ.
7. To be able to communicate adequately with individuals, groups and organisations, both verbally and non-verbally.
8. To be able to lead individuals (professionals and volunteers), groups and organisations in church themes and with goals and results.
9. To be able to initiate, develop and guide processes of church-building and church-changing and give direction in the church.

Each of the above competences can be checked by a list of indicators in behaviour; so we know what we want to see and measure.

## Outline

The keyword of ‘coaching students in the field’ in the Dutch context is ‘integration’ on several levels. I want to focus on ‘personal competence’ as fundamental to all other competences. I will write about pastoral supervision and the coaching of students along these lines.

First of all, I want to look at the ‘Dutch concept’ of pastoral supervision of students when they are on field practice. The ‘Dutch concept of supervision’ is concentrated on working at *integration* at the levels of thinking – behaviour – feeling (first integration) and the integration of the person – the profession – the context. This form of supervision has developed in the last four years at our seminary.

After the theory, I will give some practical information about pastoral supervision, mentioning some pitfalls, as far as I can see, in working with students in the field, looking at the role of the supervisor and referring to some games students like to play.

Finally, I will give some challenges, referring to our seeking, at the Dutch seminary, for what we call ‘inner space’ and looking for ‘balance’.

## The Dutch Seminary

The Dutch seminary started in 1958 and from the beginning the first director (Jannes Reiling) said that the seminary would be a ‘scientific Bible school’. What he meant by this is that the value of parish ministry has to be a prominent feature of the seminary programme. Field experience and the academic structures in theological education should not be held apart. Rather, precise coordination and interpenetration should be the goal.



Consequently, there should be no dichotomy between theological education and supervised field education. This was fundamental to the way Reiling wanted the Baptist Seminary to be. Nowadays we say, based on Reiling:

- the purpose of the task of the seminary is to train students for parish ministry. Our seminary is not a school, only for the study of theology. A minister with only the knowledge of theology does not become a good minister.
- when field education is as its best, it is a theological discipline in which theology is taught. Field education does not only teach a person to think theologically but to act theologically or, in popular language, to ‘do theology’ (in a Baptist way!<sup>3</sup>).

Coaching students in the field begins with experience and contributes towards the theological disciplines to which the student is being exposed or has already been exposed.

The Dutch seminary has always chosen not to just teach in the classroom, but to stimulate the students to experience ministry at work and then to examine that functioning by applying it to the grids of biblical, theological, historical, psychological, sociological and organisation disciplines.

The underlying purpose behind all coaching and supervision is to focus the cognitive classroom experiences upon the reality of the world and then to reflect back into the cognitive situation what students have learned from the experiences of reality and in reflection upon those experiences.

## **The Dutch Supervision Concept: experience as the source of learning and development**

I want to make a distinction between ‘coaching students in the field’ and supervision. The direct ‘coaching in the field’ is the task of the local minister who will support the student and help him (or her) to find their way in activities, in preaching, leading Bible groups, pastoral conversations and so on. You can think of a coach as having regular contact with the trainee regarding practical work, reflecting on it and looking at what the student needs and which questions he (she) asks; giving tips and advice on what to do or not to do. In coaching there can also be moments of spiritual guidance. But pastoral supervision is something else; it is a special form of

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<sup>3</sup> ‘Doing Theology in a Baptist Way’ is the title of a lecture given by Parush R. Parushev at the start of the participation of the Dutch Seminary with the Free University of Amsterdam in April 2009. It is published in the first part of the Dutch Baptista Reeks, *Zo zijn onze manieren, in gesprek over gemeentetheologie*, Teun van der Leer, ed. (Barneveld: The Dutch Baptist Union, 2009).

guidance and teaching. The basic learning approach under supervision is experiential: a student does a task and then reflects upon that task (in a methodological way) to learn from it.

## About the History of Clinical Pastoral Education

The 'Dutch Concept of Pastoral Supervision' developed in the Netherlands was based on *Clinical Pastoral Education*, which began in 1925 with Anton T. Boisen in the Worcester State Hospital with his 'summer course of clinical training'.<sup>4</sup> He gave us the analogy of students as 'living human documents'.<sup>5</sup> The internal development of Clinical Pastoral Training (CPT) began, first, with a turning from the main attention being on scientific research to actual training and the shifting of a patient-centred orientation to a student-centred one. From 1940, the focus became more concentrated on the students themselves.<sup>6</sup> They are also living, human documents which are read or misread. There were many changes, but in 1968 the 'Standards for Clinical Pastoral Education' (CPE) were formulated. CPE was searching for a proper pastoral identity. While at the beginning there had been a strong dependency on psychoanalytic ways of thought and, thereafter, on the counselling method of Carl Rogers, by the end of the 1960s there was more of an emphasis on theological reflection on the specific character of the pastorate. An important issue was to keep a clear distinction between education and therapy. Supervision is an education discipline, or what can be referred to as 'a unique and identifiable educational procedure'.<sup>7</sup>

To clarify: supervision is not coaching of tasks students have to do. Supervision is not counselling or therapy to resolve conflicts with vocation or worksetting. Supervision is not a form of education or giving advice on what someone has to do.

Supervision is a *method* that wants to make personal changes for students and offers to read the living, human documents of the students back to them so that students may know about themselves and learn to integrate theology and their competences in specific, concrete situations.<sup>8</sup> Integration is the keyword! Integration is not possible to realise in the supervision itself, but supervision can prepare for this to be realised later on

<sup>4</sup> J.E. Hemenway, *Inside the Circle: A Historical and Practical Inquiry Concerning Process Groups in Clinical Pastoral Education*, Journal of Pastoral Care Publications, Inc. 1996.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. in later years, C.V. Gerkin, *The Living Human Document*, Re-visioning Pastoral Counselling in a Hermeneutical Mode (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984).

<sup>6</sup> Hemenway, *Inside the Circle*, pp. 35-36.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas W. Klink, 'Supervision', in C.R. Fielding, ed., *Education for Ministry* (Dayton, Ohio: American Association of Theological Schools, 1966), pp. 167-217.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177.

in practice. Supervision wants to make changes possible in the hope that integration of all these aspects find a place in the practice of ministry.

The basic principles are:<sup>9</sup>

1. learning by doing;
2. discovering for oneself what is right or wrong in his/her communication by trial and error;
3. learning how to communicate;
4. the permission of freely uttering one's feelings (especially negative feelings);
5. the necessity of reflecting on the theological root of communication and by doing so on the specific character of the pastoral role.

Within CPE there were several models, linked with social scientifics or social psychology, working with case-studies, pastoral counselling (Rogers) and the so-called 'psychodynamic approach'.<sup>10</sup>

## Pastoral supervision in the Netherlands: intentions and method

In the Netherlands three theologians were trained in the United States of America and introduced the model of Clinical Pastoral Education to our country: Faber, Zijlstra and Berger. In the beginning (1969) they wanted to work on 'attitude' and 'changing attitude' as well as on knowledge about the inner conflicts of students in communication with others: emotional problems, neurotic fixations. Students had to learn to listen carefully in their pastorates and be sensitive pastors.

Nowadays there is an accent on *learning by reflection*.

A definition of supervision is: *the process by which the supervisor helps the student find the meaning in the educational encounter that will contribute to his learning and his competence in that and other situations.*<sup>11</sup> Supervision is a *learning activity* and a *theological task* whereby students examine their ministry experiences for theological meaning and plan future ministry, conscious of theological guidelines.

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<sup>9</sup> W. Zijlstra, *Klinische pastorale vorming* (Assen: Van Gorcum & Comp, 1969).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. E.E. Thornton, *Professional Education for Ministry: a History of Clinical Pastoral Education* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970).

<sup>11</sup> Klink, 'Supervision', p. 177.

Supervision is learning from experience. Students should learn about themselves, their functioning and their environment and should see the relevant meaning in all of these.

The general task is to bring changes within students while they are in the process of becoming ministers (or more effective ministers). The basic change which supervision wants to bring about is the inner character and outer behaviour of students. These two related areas have a positive influence on each another. Supervision wants to bring about the integration of the two so that they have a single focus.<sup>12</sup>

Significant change happens to us as a result of our reflection upon experiences. But also other things influence us toward change. Whenever we pass through crises (such as marriage(!), divorce, serious illness or death), we are likely to face situations which are a catalyst for changing us. Whenever these events occur, they are likely to open up the student so that the supervisor can help guide him/her to healthy behaviour.

Therefore, in supervising, we need to know the student; know what he/she is doing, but also know the student's life and his/her experiences in life. We have significant people in our lives as well as significant life experiences. Both are important. Read the student as a living, human document and you will see what is the meaning for him/her of a life-event.

Supervision is a method of education designed to effect those personal changes which will permit the integration into practice of self-understanding, relevant theory, substantive knowledge and functional skills. The measure of its educational achievement is to be found in its effect on practice in specific instances.

Karen Horney<sup>13</sup> has written about the integration of the 'personal self' and the 'professional self': 'The integration of the personal self is necessary for the professional competence aimed at by supervision, but is not sufficient. Integrated functioning in a general way calls here for a specific content: it needs to be related to and interwoven with the demands which characterise professional work.'<sup>14</sup>

Professional competence thus requires the integration of two dimensions:

- the professional is able to combine his/her integrated functioning in a general human way as a person (first dimension);

<sup>12</sup> Doran McCarty, *The supervision of ministry students* (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention, 1978).

<sup>13</sup> K. Horney, *Neurosis and Human Growth. The Struggle toward Self-Realization* (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., Norton Library, 1970).

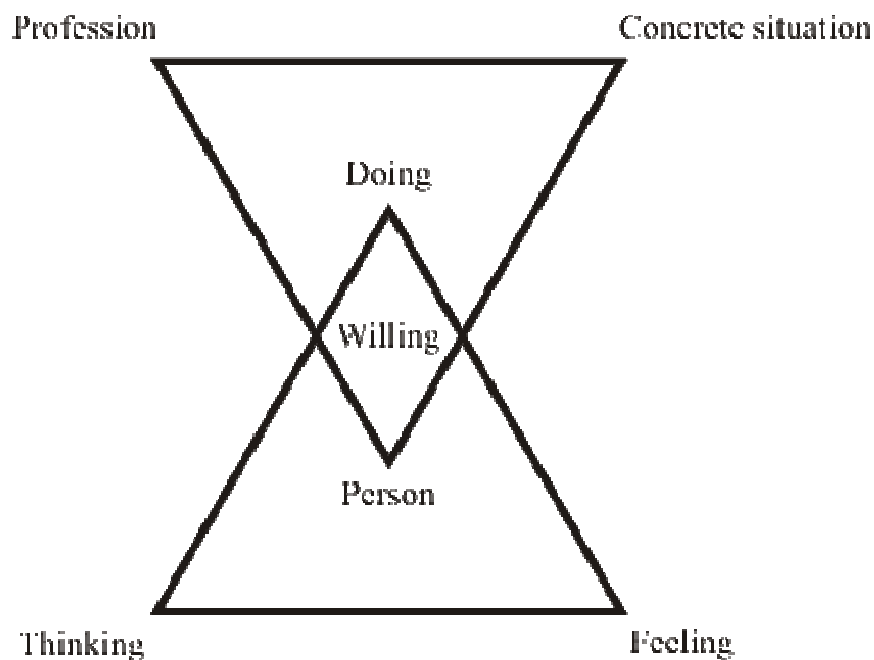
<sup>14</sup> Ibid., pp 171-172.

- with his/her methodical activity within the framework of professional performance in a specific work situation (second dimension) in such a way that the resulting integrated whole can be said to operate as a professional person.

So, in the Netherlands supervision gives a lot of attention to the changes in the ‘personal self’ in relation to the ‘professional self.’

There is consensus on what is called the ‘Dutch concept of supervision’. Supervision is to learn to function as an integrated working person. Integration is focused on two levels: feeling – thinking – doing (the first level), and is needed between a person – the concrete work setting (context) and the profession. At the point of integration is the concept of ‘willing’.

### Diagram – Integration of the Person and the Profession



So the key questions in supervision are easy (though not the answers!):<sup>15</sup>

- Did I think the same as I felt?
- Did I do the same as I thought or felt?
- Did I want what I did or said?

‘Thinking, feeling, doing, willing’ have to be congruent with each other.

<sup>15</sup> F. Kortenhagen et al, *Docenten leren relecteren* (Soest: Nelissen, 2002).

## The way of supervision at the Dutch Baptist Seminary

I began as a teacher/supervisor at the Dutch Seminary in 2006. The Board of the Seminary decided that this kind of learning and working on integration is essential for students. We (a team of four teachers<sup>16</sup>) developed a structure for supervision within the normal curriculum.

When a student has a period of practical work in ministry, he (she) receives supervision as follows:

- 10 – 15 sessions of one hour (individually);
- 1½ hours in a group of two;
- 2 hours with three or four students.

The student formulates themes and questions he/she wishes to work on and learn from, for example, pastoral conversation, preaching, reacting in conflict situations, seeking God's guidance for the future, understanding irritations when the church council meets. The learning themes are personal and very diverse.

Each student presents a case study: an experience on which to reflect. The central question is always: what do you want to learn in this situation? When talking about the case, the supervisor pays attention to several different aspects: the integration of feeling – thinking – doing, and the congruence between the person, the context and the professional role.

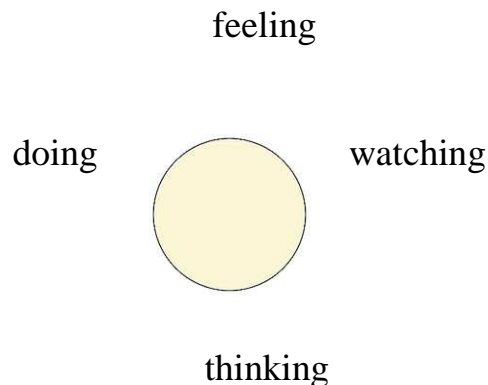
Afterwards, the student writes a reflection on the session, highlighting what has been learnt about the case, about the interaction in the supervision session, and about him/herself. Students should learn to reflect on situations and consider what they want to change next time. The reflections can then be discussed, with the supervisor and other students giving input.

Supervision is there to help students learn and therefore in supervision we look at the 'feeling, watching, thinking and doing' of the learning styles which Kolb taught us (see figure).<sup>17</sup> The circle has to go on....

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<sup>16</sup> Teun van der Leer (Director), Henk Bakker, Eduard Groen, Wout Huizing.

<sup>17</sup> D.A. Kolb, *Experiential Learning. Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (New Jersey: Englewood Cliffs, 1984).



## Looking for integration

So, supervision is there to help the student, first of all, to achieve *personal integration*. We are what we do. Identity is the integration of behaviour. Students need to develop their identity of who they are as persons, integrating all the functions of their private and professional lives.

There are three important issues of personal identity for seminarians:

1. Each seminarian needs to identify and accept his own positive and negative attributes;
2. The seminarian needs to develop inner processes of self discipline to replace reliance upon external control;
3. The seminarian needs recognition and acceptance of his/her desire to support and show concern for other people.

The best way for students to learn about themselves is through supervision, which gives the students specific data about who they are, how they function and how other people see them. This is because the main instrument in supervision is feedback: holding mirrors up before the students so that they can see who they are in the perceptions of other people and in various situations. This feedback comes from the supervisor, but also from the peers of the students and from members of the church.

It is important to listen to the reactions and feedback from these 'laypeople'. They know instinctively what they like about ministers and can inform the students of their impressions, while other laypeople may be able to discern the reasons for their instincts and be able to give specifics when giving feedback to the students. Therefore, at the Dutch Seminary we have 'listening reports' and 'evaluation papers', which reveal the reactions to their preaching or leading of a Bible study group. The feedback from church members is important as, ultimately, they are the ones to whom the students will minister!

## Cognitive, affective behaviour

It is at the level of the affective approach that supervision has its most important dimension in learning. It is my observation that few ministers are dismissed from their place of service because they do not have enough conceptual knowledge or because they are unable to perform the professional tasks of ministry. They are more likely to be dismissed because of problems in the affective area of their lives such as an inadequacy in their relationships with people. The supervisor has the opportunity to help students in the affective domain because they can see how students function in the context of the pressures of real ministry. So full attention is given to what students experience and are feeling: they have to learn about their own feelings, recognise them and know what is happening within themselves and what are the effects on their thinking, reacting etc. We want to help students to find what is called 'inner space'<sup>18</sup>: the need to have space to become aware of emotions and feelings and learn to feel free and be calm to encounter them; not run away from emotions or neglect them, not become only anxious or angry or sad, but give those feelings a place without being carried away by them. Students have to learn to look at a situation in differing ways and see several perspectives.

What is meant by 'inner space'? Let me illustrate. You are driving on the highway and there is a car driving very close behind you, almost on your bumper. You can only think about the car behind you and this dominates your thinking and feeling. You cannot think why the driver is acting that way; the sun is still shining and you are in pleasant company. All your 'thinking' and 'doing' is dominated by that car. It surrounds you. When this happens, you do not have 'inner space'. You should learn to look at your own reactions and ask yourself why you are so triggered by this situation. You have to learn to choose how you want to handle it and feel free and keep calm.

In the Dutch Baptist Seminary we have stated in our school philosophy that we want to work at 'inner space' for students. That means that there is 'inner space' for thinking, feeling and doing; to learn to look from several perspectives at the different situations you have to face as a minister and make your own choices, freely and calmly.

## Context

At the second level of integration one of the main things is that students must learn to 'read' the contexts in which ministries take place. The

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<sup>18</sup> C. Leget, *Ruimte om te sterven* (Tielt: Lannoo, 2003).



temptation of every young minister is to try to deal with an individual or a situation without recognising that there is a whole system and a community of people involved: families, the whole congregation, the community or the denomination are all involved. Each context has complex interrelationships.

This means that students can use supervision to learn about formal and hidden agendas rather than entering their own ministry with a kind of naïvety upon which they act that leaves them vulnerable. They can, for example, learn about power: who has it, who wants it, what price the minister has to pay to get it, how long it usually takes for the power to shift and what are the legitimate and illegitimate uses of power; for example, discover that ‘blood is thicker than water’ in communities where people are usually related. The members may criticise one another and they may even criticise their relatives, but the pastors are outsiders regardless of whether they are right or not. When ministers criticise their congregations or members of the congregation, they will find that the community and the congregation will coalesce together and make the pastors the outsiders.

All of this means that supervision is a good place to learn about organisational development, grid systems for understanding organisations and critical paths of working with organisations. So students need to develop a kind of diagnostic process by which they are able to determine, in a short period of time, the relative healthfulness of the people with whom they are working. And they need to be able to learn to read contexts and find out what are the areas which will cause difficulty and what are the areas upon which they can depend upon to build their ministry.

## **Personal and professional identity**

Whilst students are learning and taking on the role of the minister, there can be a problem of integrating a professional identity with a personal identity. Students can expect to experience three particular elements and they must be conscious of where they are with regard to each of these:<sup>19</sup>

1. They are likely to experience being uncomfortable with the ministry role and uncertain about what this role means. They are not sure whether they are acting as a person or playing the role of a minister.
2. That of losing their personhood in the ministry role. In trying to overcome this, they may so identify the ministry role that they react to situations totally as a minister, sublimating their feelings and personhood.

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<sup>19</sup> McCarty, *The supervision of ministry students*, p. 22.

3. A third element is when ministers are able to keep their own personhood and personal identity, yet are able to use the ministry role in situations where it is appropriate for them to function as ministers.

Integration cannot be taught in a conceptual form; it can only occur in ministers at the feeling level where they develop 'instincts' for reacting appropriately and affectively, consistent with the Christian faith.

It is important to see that the professional identity of a pastor is complicated. You can call the profession of a minister a profession of 'being'. Who is the pastor? The way he/she operates is linked to the person he/she is. In the past the minister had to explain the Bible, preach well, inform people how to read the Bible and be a pastor. Nowadays church members want to know who the minister is. They expect authenticity; role play is not sufficient.

The identity of the pastor is also linked to his/her own beliefs and there can be a danger that he/she becomes only a 'professional believer'. There has to be a balance between functioning as a professional yet taking care of your own spirituality. You should not read books only because its contents can be used for your preaching or in a Bible study group. You have to learn to feed yourself spiritually (meditation, praying, reading, silence etc.); it is this spirituality that makes it possible to function as a minister for the people. It is tricky that your profession is interwoven with your own believing. In the work as a pastor – preaching, praying with people – your own personal beliefs are challenged. That can be an inspiration, but it can also feel like a burden. You have to be authentic. There is also a need for 'functional authenticity': passing on, in a professional way, your own spirituality. Your 'being' as a person and a believer will give direction to your professional 'doing'.

That's why it is important to give good attention to the life stories of students, and know that the story of their lives is interwoven with the story of learning and working.<sup>20</sup> The student has to learn to make the right relationship between his personal life and professional work.

Why does somebody want to become a minister? Are there moments in the life of the student, other people, cultural events, perhaps, that have influenced his/her choice to study theology? What changes take place in the beliefs of the student whilst studying theology? It is important to take time for biographical reflections and for the student to ask: what is it that makes me who I am now and what I now believe?

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<sup>20</sup> To read more about this see H.C.I. Andriessen and R. Miethner, *Praxis der Supervision. Beispiel: Pastorale Supervision* (Heidelberg: Roland Asange Verlag, 1993).

In this reflection you can also look at pastoral attitude: what is it that makes me especially want to help *this* kind of person or handle *this* problem (for example: the traumatised, victims of sexual abuse)?

There is much to see in reflecting on the life story of the student and I think it is necessary that we pay attention to this in the supervision and coaching of students.

## Calling into ministry?

Through supervision, students have to discover how comfortable they feel with their ministerial role and identity as they test their calling and prove their gifts, and determine whether or not ministry is a divine calling for them. One of the most important ways for a student to use supervised ministry is to find out whether or not they should be in ministry. So we have to determine the reality of one's call to ministry.

Secondly, after determining whether they should be in ministry at all, what type of ministry are they called to be engaged in? There is a great variety of ministries: preacher, teacher, leader, pastor, manager or church-builder etc.

Examining the kind of ministry with students and the strengths they have and need, will give them clues to the further education and training that they should pursue. They will be able to see, for example, whether they need a broad theological background or more technical training.

The decision to go into ministry is dynamic. God is in constant conversation with us rather than having spoken once and never speaking again. This means that students will need to recognise that the decisions which they make at the present time will need to be re-examined.

## Pitfalls

First of all I will look at some pitfalls facing the supervisor.

### *The job of the supervisor*

First, supervisors must be aware of themselves, because they can create problems in the supervisory relationship. If they do not feel 'OK' about themselves, they will be unlikely to be able to help students: they can transmit an attitude of defeatism or anger to their supervisees. A supervisor needs to know where he/she is in his/her own pilgrimage in life and faith. As teachers and supervisors we have a particular history, heritage and future. All of these affect what happens on the interface between ourselves and our students/supervisees. The supervisory relationship is shaped by

how long we have been in ministry, our dreams, and whether they are being fulfilled or frustrated. We have a particular view towards the world in which we live, which may be sympathetic or hostile. While theological issues are involved in whatever stance we take, supervisory issues are also tied up with it. As supervisors we must know our own expectations, feelings, needs and desires and the capacity for growth.

As a pastoral supervisor, I am aware that each student comes with cognitive, spiritual and emotional mind-sets which bear upon his/her educational process. Knowing my own cognitive, spiritual and emotional mind-sets enables me to share myself, not just my knowledge and skills. As a supervisor, I find it imperative to model authenticity, integrity and compassion. I engage in a supervisory relationship which allows me to name and claim my strengths and weaknesses, as well as risk sharing my insights, beliefs and skills.

***Some pitfalls:***

*Defensiveness:* If a supervisor has a general defensive reaction pattern, then his/her effectiveness is minimal.

*Negativism:* Students not only learn from being told they are wrong, they also learn from being told that they are right.

*Confrontation:* Students have to be confronted about what they are doing, the implications of what they are doing and the meaning of it. The supervisor is often uncomfortable with confrontation. Supervisors like to be 'nice guys', but non-confrontive supervision is usually non-supervision. In the future, students are going to be confronted by people to whom they minister, so they should have the opportunity during their supervision to learn how to deal with confrontation. Many students have come from sheltered backgrounds where they have never been seriously challenged. They will not always live in that kind of emotional womb. Confrontation is very much like isometrics in physical exercise: when students push against confrontation, they grow their 'ministry muscles'.

*Try to become psychotherapists:* There is a danger that supervisors may try to become psychotherapists. They should examine the behaviour and functions of the student and help the student to look at what is behind such behaviour, but the supervisor is not a therapist.

*Only deal with a student's development skill:* Supervisors create problems when they only deal with a student's development skill or competences. Students need to get in touch with more than just the mechanics of ministry.

*Keep confidence:* There are serious problems whenever supervisors cannot keep confidences. The whole supervisory relationship is based on the integrity of confidences being kept. Material should only be shared between the supervisor and the student.

All of us have a *god complex* to some degree. This gets in the way of supervision when supervisors try to create a student in their own image or when they act as an ‘answer man’, because they feel that they have to fulfil the role of omniscience. A supervisor has to know his/her own limitations or weaknesses and must be powerful enough not to try and rescue students from whatever difficult situations they find themselves in. The ‘god-complex’ often shows itself as supervisors try to fulfil the roles of judge, reconciler and saviour.

*Prejudice* can also be a problem for supervisors. They may be prejudiced towards women, racial groups, lifestyles or theological stances. These need to be honestly examined so that they do not affect the supervisory relationship.

*Supervisory split:* Be alert to the possibility of the student trying to create a split between the supervisor and (for example) the director. Students may represent to the director an erroneous picture of the problem he or she is having with the supervisor. The student may misrepresent to the supervisor the expectations of the director. Regular meetings should be held to discuss the student to avoid this possibility.

Finally, supervisors should also be *evaluated*. Students should be given the opportunity to evaluate their supervisors so that supervision becomes a mutual learning experience.

## **Other pitfalls: games students play**

Eric Berne,<sup>21</sup> and transactional analysis, has made us aware of games that go on between people. The supervision and coaching of ‘students in the field’ is one of those areas where a great deal of game playing goes on. Game playing is counterproductive to supervision because whenever it happens it is signalling resistance on the part of the supervisor, the supervisee or both to a significant aspect of the supervisory relationship and programme. Supervisors need to be aware of the game playing process, which can be frustrating if not understood. When we become frustrated, rather than identifying the problem, we must turn our attention to the ‘game playing’ in order to bring it to a halt. Not all game playing has to stop, because there are some defence mechanisms which the supervisee still

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<sup>21</sup> Eric Berne, *Games people play* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1967).

needs in order to function and cope. When supervisors suddenly announce that game playing is going on, they often strip the supervisees of their defensive garments and leave them naked which, in turn, paralyses the supervisees so that they are unable to continue with the work of supervision.

Here I list some ‘games’ which you may identify amongst your own students:

*Supervisory split* and ‘*let’s you and him fight*’. The student may make this one of the facets of the supervisory split. Students will want you and another teacher or coach in the field to argue the solutions to problems while the student stands by and watches.

*Seduction*: flattery, getting supervisors to defend, protect and promote them, or in some way to respond favourably whether or not reality indicates that as a proper response. It is often a kind of blackmail where the supervisee says: ‘be nice to me, because I am nice to you’.

‘*Yes but*’ is one of the most prevalent games. Here students seem to agree but eventually show their real resistance. They do not have the courage to confront directly nor are they free enough from defensiveness to hear and act on the suggestions which are made. As long as the ‘yes but’ is played, students can never get beyond themselves and their defensiveness to deal with the issues which are confronting them.

‘*Kick me*’: students invite others to punish them for things which they have done. But they are putting themselves down in order to get sympathy.

Also, be aware of students who play ‘*I’ll take the high road*’: students want to demonstrate their new-found knowledge, rather than meeting the life situation of the people to whom they are ministering. A large part of game playing occurs when a supervisor tries to confront them because they have an answer that is a ‘stopper’: this is what they have learned in class as ‘it is the truth’, and they have to stand up for it.

Another insidious game is ‘*I’ve done the best I can under the circumstances*’. Students recognise the limited results which their actions brought but justify their limited results by saying that ‘under the circumstances’ they did the best they could. The implication is that there was nothing wrong with the way they functioned; it was just the circumstances which, if changed, would have better results. This tends to lead to:

1. hindering students from taking responsibility since the conditions weren’t right;

2. the student thinking that a supervisor has any right to challenge them about their ministry because of the situation.

They fail to realise that they are responsible regardless of the situation because there will never be any situation which is ideal to bring about the result which they want.

*'I did what you told me'* is a way in which students push onto supervisors the responsibility of what happens or what does not happen. This is especially an effective game which gives difficulty to supervisors where students only half-heartedly try to carry out behavioural change or a new approach. Whenever it goes wrong, the student is able to chop the supervisor down because the supervisor suggested the action.

Another game is called *'Forty thousand Frenchman can't be wrong'*. Whenever supervisors confront students, the students often retort that nobody else has ever told them that or that other people have told them something else. They play a challenging game inasmuch as they challenge their supervisor to say that they are correct and the host of others who have dealt with the student have been wrong.

## Challenges

### *Professionalism and spirituality*

The goal of the seminaries and of supervision is to help the students to become professional. Supervision is there to help transform students into professional ministers.

My interpretation of *professionalism* is:

- doing the tasks of a vocation in a manner which has proved to be the most adequate and advantageous for the disciplines necessary within that vocation. Professionalism cannot be measured by accepting at face value that the educated are professional and the uneducated are unprofessional. Professionalism does not mean that a person will function perfectly, but professionals will know what their competences are and usually recognise the areas in which those competences can be utilised profitably. Professionals will also realise their limitations and invite other professionals to assist in a particular task. Supervision provides a method to work on this knowledge of oneself, to achieve and know one's own competences and limitations.
- there are times when ministers do not feel the charisma to undertake tasks which have to be done, but the professionals will go ahead and

do the job anyway. Ministers may be ‘down’ at times, as far as their own mental attitude is concerned, and may not feel like, for example, preaching. This does not mean they do not have something important to say, but it may mean they are suffering from some kind of illness, have problems at home or are depressed. Professionals are not limited by the emotions of the moment, but recognise that a call goes beyond that particular moment and they know what they have to do (sometimes this is to make clear that they have reached their limit).

- a professional has reached a level of competence and wants to share that competence with others. The professional offers a disciplined way in which to help others reach professionalism. In the Netherlands we have started ‘intervision-groups’ with ministers to stimulate this. Students who were supervised at the seminary wanted to continue this form of learning and formed an intervision-group to look at their own work in ministry. This is important for the development of (professional) ministry as a whole.

### ***Spirituality***

Spiritual formation is the development of the interior life, through specific religious exercises such as prayer, meditation, contemplation and devotional reading. The proper spiritual formation of students is also a goal of supervision.

The supervisor may have to help the students untangle previous religious experiences so they can understand why they are dealing with religious experiences at the present time in the manner in which they are.

It is important for students to shore up the interior aspects of their lives. They will be using many administrative procedures, counselling techniques and literary criticism just as do their counterparts in secular disciplines. This makes it important for them to learn that their own spirituality is a distinctive facet of their professional identity, so that they are not tempted to rely only on secular techniques ‘baptised’ into religious service!

### **Seeking a balance**

In the Netherlands we see it as a challenge to pay attention to the integration and balance that students/ministers need regarding several aspects of their life and work. We look at it (in supervision and other moments) during study and we stimulate the thinking when ministers have



a sabbatical period. We formulate what is important to have a balance in life:

1. *Care for health*: you have to move physically: for example walking, cycling, swimming, working in the garden; and eat healthily. It is important to look after these aspects of life to feel well.
2. *Reflection*: take time to reflect on yourself and your experiences and seek a balance between action and reflection. It is important to keep control over your free time and to not always be working. It is important to stand still, asking what you have to do, what God asks you to do; otherwise you won't have room for experiences with others. So the question is: do you take enough time for silence and reflection?
3. *Mutual professional contacts*: when you are the only professional in a small church, you have a specific position. Often you may speak of 'functional relations'. But when you are doing vulnerable work, like in ministry, it is important to talk about your experiences and find support from others. So we want to stimulate mutual professional contacts: intervision-groups to talk about success, but certainly also about uncertainties and failures, searching for how to handle situations. Do you have such contacts, outside your own church?
4. *Private life*: is there a balance between private life and work? Do you have time enough for your family? A complicated factor is your 'work at home'. Do you have time for hobbies? Do you invest in special relationships with friends? Do you have time to recreate? When and how?
5. *Spirituality*: there has to be a balance between 'giving' and 'receiving'. You can become exhausted when seeing so much illness, unfairness and problems of people. You want to try to give a lot of yourself. How do you care for yourself spiritually? Are there moments for contemplation and silence without thinking how to use it in your worship or preaching or Bible study? To have time for other people, you need to have time for yourself.

So we ask ministers and students<sup>22</sup> to answer and reflect on the following questions as an example of the themes that can be central within supervision and challenge:

1. what do you like in your work; what makes you feel 'like a fish in water'?

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<sup>22</sup> W. Huizing, ed., *Onder het vergrootglas, Pastorale supervisie aan studenten en voorgangers* (Barneveld: The Dutch Baptist Union, 2010), p. 91.

2. what things do you have to do in your work which are difficult for you to do right now?
3. what things do you have to do in your work which you would like not to have to do, but are still doing? They just happen and you think you have to do them.
4. what things do you want to do but never manage to do, which leads to frustration?
5. what things do you fail to do, because you do not have time, though it is not frustrating?

1	2	3	4	5
Fish in water	Difficult to do	Things that 'just' occur	Frustration	Not doing, but not frustrating

## Finally

I have tried to make clear that there are many aspects, possibilities, limitations and pitfalls of coaching students in the field. I hope that this way of education and supervision is or becomes an important part of teaching at our seminaries in Europe.

**Dr Wout Huizing** is pastoral supervisor at the Dutch Baptist Seminary.

# **Climate Change: Covenant making, breaking and restoration<sup>1</sup>**

John Weaver

## **A. Introduction**

God makes covenant, we break the covenant, God redeems and invites us to work with God in the restoration of creation. The biblical picture is of God's continuous involvement with creation described in terms of the 'covenant' agreement that God initiates and offers. Israel understood the world as God's good creation in the light of her experience of the exodus from Egypt, the covenant made at Sinai, and entry into the Promised Land. It was from its experience of the life, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ, and the establishment of the new covenantal community in the power of the Holy Spirit, that the New Testament Church understood God's intention to perfect and complete creation. Thus the natural world is given a place in the whole story of God's purpose to make covenantal fellowship, a process with an eschatological goal.

In our current concern for the environment we are presented with the growing statistics of global warming and climate change: the heating up of the planet produced by the burning of coal, oil and gas and destruction of the rainforests; rising sea levels; the poisoning of the oceans; the exhaustion of natural resources; and the unjust use of Earth's good gifts. If we ask of scripture, whose world is it, the answer comes back loud and clear: 'The Earth is the Lord's' (Psalm 24:1).

We are beginning to recognise the disastrous effects of covenant breaking through selfish human activities, and the need for covenant restoration through Christ-like living.

Yet we still tend to think that we have the science and the technology, and therefore all the answers – no need of God. We are greedy and selfish, as expressed in the words of George Bush Snr, who said, in response to the World Summit on the Environment in Rio de Janeiro (1992), 'The American way of life is not negotiable'.

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<sup>1</sup> IBTS Postgraduate Seminar, 27<sup>th</sup> October 2010.

## B. Covenant Making and Breaking

### 1. The Noah Covenant: God's covenant with the whole of creation

Covenant, *berit*, shares a root with the Genesis word to describe divine creativity, *bara*. This root has the sense of 'binding'. 'Through God's gracious love, creation is bound by the everlasting covenant to the invisible God, and all creatures are bound to each other in a web of interrelationship'.<sup>2</sup> In the beginning creation is in a state of *shalom*, which is peace, harmony and integrity (see Isaiah 11, 24, 32, 55; Psalms 89 and 104). A new and redeemed creation in Christ will exhibit the same characteristics (2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 8:18ff; Colossians 1:15-21; Revelation 21).

In the covenant with Noah (Genesis 6:11-9:17) God commanded Noah to conserve nature (6:19), and after the Flood God establishes a covenant with all of creation (9:8-14). The new covenant after the flood reminds us that we are always looking from the side of a broken creation. God's saving of creation is seen in God's heart, as God remembers Noah. The land is still to be fertile. But then we are led into a discussion of what relationship creatures should have with one another, and how can the violence and the killing be in accordance with God's absolute sovereignty? The answer is that paradise is lost. The groaning of creation (Romans 8:23) starts here.<sup>3</sup>

God's words to Noah after the Flood declared God's covenantal relationship: *Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind* (Genesis 9:14-15). A brief exploration of Genesis 1-11 can provide a basis for a Christian concern for the environment.

Genesis chapters 1 and 2 present a picture of the beginnings of the universe and of this world. We find the theological declaration that God created it, God ordered it, God loved it, and God was pleased with it. With such affirmation of God's purposes, we, who claim to worship God, should be concerned.

But then tragedy strikes in the form of human beings with God-given free will. Human beings decided that they wanted to be like God, and know

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<sup>2</sup> Church of England's Mission and Public Affairs Council, 2005, *Sharing God's Planet* (London: Church House Publishing), p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Margot Kassmann, *Covenant, Praise and Justice* in David Hallman, ed., *Ecotheology: Voices from South and North* (Geneva: WCC and Maryknoll: Orbis, 1994), p. 29.

all the answers. They became jealous and violent and the killing started. They believed that they had no need of God and God's wisdom as creator at all. This is recounted in Genesis chapters 3, 4 and 5. In our modern technological world we should be warned that we, who play God and think we know all the answers, should be concerned.

The story progresses through the account of the Noah Flood in Genesis chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9. God was disappointed with creation, God regretted what he had done, and God destroyed all but Noah, his family, and the animals God ordered him to preserve. When the Flood receded at God's command, God made a covenant with Noah and the whole of the created world. If God cares in this way, if God is concerned, and if God has declared this covenant of faithful love with creation, then we too should covenant with God in our care of the planet.

But, sadly, the story of human power play returns in Genesis 11, where human beings seek to scale the heights of God only to become scattered and confused. We have built our 'tower of Babel', a tower of industrial development, committing the sin of idolatry as we do. We seek to become 'world-creators', claiming for ourselves that which belongs to God. The result has been a trail of violation, failure, disaster and destruction.

We recognise the counterpart of this tragic story at Pentecost, the birth of the church, as a restored and redeemed community, modelling to the world the possibility of a new humanity in Christ – the new covenant community.

## **2. The Sinai Covenant with its emphasis on love for God and for neighbour**

The Sinai covenant presents the creator's framework of living within God's creation, and is interpreted by Jesus in the two commands which sum up the whole law – the love of God and love for neighbour (Matthew 22:36-40).

In Psalm 24:1 we read, *The Earth is the Lord's*, but also God has given it to us – Psalm 115:16 – but it is leasehold – to rule on God's behalf (Genesis 1:26,28). Our unique relationship with God leads to our ability to think, choose, create, love, pray, and exercise control. Research, discovery and invention, in biology, chemistry, physics and other spheres, and all the triumphs of technology, are part of our God-given role. We co-operate with the processes of nature, we do not create them. God has entrusted us – we are caretakers not landowners. The Year of Jubilee teaches us that we do not hold the freehold rights – Leviticus 25:23 (cf. Luke 4:19).

Chris Wright notes that Jubilee was intended to protect the small householder and also ‘served to establish an economic practice for redeeming the land and the people’;<sup>4</sup> and Peter Carruthers suggests that Sabbath and Jubilee give three principles for farming and food production: sharing – with the poor; caring – for the earth; and restraint – of power and wealth. But there are imbalances in the world food system, there is unfair trading, and a growing industrialisation of agriculture, which is destroying the environment. Instead of keeping the Sabbath we have a ‘Sabbath-less society’.<sup>5</sup>

Michael Northcott reminds us that the Old Testament prophets criticised the people for breaking this covenant through their unjust treatment of the poor and the vulnerable, and through their failure to care for the land.<sup>6</sup> For example, God warned the people through the prophet Isaiah: *The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt. Therefore earth’s inhabitants are burned up and very few are left* (Isaiah 24:5-6). The exclusion of the poor and the degradation and exhaustion of the environment are results of ignoring God’s care of creation and God’s justice expressed in the Covenant.

Keeping the Sabbath is the way in which we become true stewards, weekly declaring that God is lord of creation. For Jews who observe Shabbat, it is a precious gift from God, a day of great joy eagerly awaited throughout the week, a time when they can set aside all of their weekday concerns and devote themselves to higher pursuits. They remember the significance of Shabbat, both as a commemoration of creation and as a commemoration of their freedom from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 20). In Exodus 35 we recognise the importance of the connection between the building of the tabernacle and the Sabbath command. The tabernacle represents the fulfilment of the covenant promise: ‘I will make my dwelling with you .... I will be your God and you shall be my people’. But the actual sign of the covenant is the Sabbath.

One of the great gifts that the Judaeo-Christian tradition can give to the environmental movement is the concept of Sabbath; not just a pause for breath before carrying on consuming, and not just for humans. In Genesis 1, we find that the crown of creation is not humankind, created on the sixth day, but the Sabbath, instituted on the seventh day, when God took a rest,

<sup>4</sup> Chris Wright in Sarah Tillet, ed., *Caring for Creation, Biblical and Theological Perspectives* (Oxford: Bible Reading Fellowship, 2005), p. 58.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Carruthers, ‘Creation and the Gospels’ in Tillet, ed., *Caring for Creation*, p. 74.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Northcott, ‘Ecology and Christian Ethics’, in Robin Gill, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 221-2.

and God did not do so because of personal tiredness. The Mosaic covenant commands regular jubilee seasons when debts are forgiven, families reunited, and land left fallow. We wear ourselves, and the land, out by constantly rushing. There is nothing that works against a green lifestyle more than being in a hurry. Too much of a hurry to ponder shopping choices. Too much of a hurry to walk rather than drive. Too much of a hurry to cook. Too much of a hurry to grow food. Too much of a hurry to turn off the TV and play with our children. Too much of a hurry to sleep properly and give the world a rest from our self important busyness.<sup>7</sup> Finally, perhaps, too much of a hurry to have noticed the damage we have done to the planet, before it is too late. We need to step back and take the time to look, to learn about what we see, so that we can appreciate in more and more astonished detail the beauty of what we see, and we can love it, if we but give ourselves the time.

The technical control of time (departing from the natural God-given rhythms) is human-centred and takes our times away from a relationship with the creator. 'The Sabbath reflects on faith in the creator-redeemer, who is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. As God consummates the work of creation, so God will complete God's purposes in redemption as the incarnate Lord.'<sup>8</sup> Jesus declared the Sabbath principle at the beginning of his ministry (Luke 4:18-19) and we are called to live as Sabbath-keepers within the new covenant in Christ (Romans 8:18-21).

### 3. The Incarnation – the New Covenant in Christ

We perceive creation as God's creation (Genesis 1:1; John 1:1-18; Colossians 1:15-21) and recognise that we and the universe exist through the outworking of the love of God, exemplified in the Incarnation. Moltmann maintains that:

an ecological doctrine of creation implies a new kind of thinking about God. The centre of this thinking is no longer the distinction between God and the world. The centre is the recognition of the presence of God *in* the world and the presence of the world *in* God.<sup>9</sup>

The ruthless conquest and exploitation of nature in the Enlightenment found its theological legitimisation in the distinction between the world and God. The understanding of the covenant-making

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<sup>7</sup> These thoughts were presented in the Radio 4 sermon 03.10.10 given by Claire Foster, Chief Executive of the Ethics Academy and Senior Adviser at the St Paul's Institute for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Ethics, London, and a former National Policy Adviser in Science, Medicine, Technology and Environmental Issues to the Archbishops' Council of the Church of England.

<sup>8</sup> James Houston in Tillet, *Caring for Creation*, p. 95.

<sup>9</sup> Jurgen Moltmann, *God in Creation. An Ecological Doctrine of Creation (Gifford Lectures 1984-1985)* (London: SCM, 1985), p. 13.

creator, of God's immanence and presence through the Spirit help us to rectify this error. For human beings to 'have dominion' over nature is a challenge for us to act with this covenant-making creator God, imitating God's loving kindness and faithfulness with the whole of creation.

We recognise that God's relationship with the natural order is implicit in the very act of creation. Creation is contingent, it is God's will that it should be the way that it is. God's relationship with creation is faithful and continuous, and God gives value to all life that God has created and cares for. There is no clearer place where God's involvement and God's valuing of creation is seen than in the Incarnation. Through our scientific and technological approaches there is a danger of removing God from creation, except as the ultimate source, and substituting nature and natural laws, discovered by human beings. But as the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews notes, God shares our humanity in Christ (Hebrews 4:14-16), which is the epitome of God's covenant with human beings.

James Houston takes Moltmann's Trinitarian view of creation as his basis for understanding the relationship of God with creation. Moltmann explains the character of the triune God in terms of *perichoresis* – 'mutually indwelling as a perichoretic community of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Likewise, God's relationship with his creation is one of mutual indwelling.'<sup>10</sup> He notes that Moltmann sees evolution as creative but not as redemptive, and so we should not confuse evolution with redemption nor teleology with eschatology.

Houston argues that if God is love and created all things in love, then it is more helpful to think of creation carried out by the Word of God, who became incarnate in human form (John 1:1-14). He assumes human form in space and time. Our true humanity is to be located in Christ, and when we locate ourselves outside Christ we find ourselves in disharmony with God's purpose for the well-being of creation.<sup>11</sup>

It may be helpful to consider Gordon Kaufman's re-phrasing of the opening verses of John 1: 'In the beginning was creativity, and the creativity was with God, and the creativity was God'. He thinks of God as 'creativity itself', manifest throughout the cosmos, where life emerges through the creativity of the evolutionary process.<sup>12</sup> Kaufman is anxious to bring God and nature together, where 'God', 'world' and 'humanity', and their relationships to each other, can highlight our 'ecological

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<sup>10</sup> Houston, 'Creation and Incarnation' in Tillet, *Caring for Creation*, p. 90-91.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 88-89.

<sup>12</sup> Gordon D Kaufman, *In the beginning ..... Creativity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), p. ix-x.



embeddedness' in the natural world order.<sup>13</sup> Covenant is the key to these relationships.

John tells us that God loved the world so much that he gave his only son – John 3:16, and it is in Christ that creation is redeemed.

It is important to avoid compartmentalising ecological reflection, separating human concerns from those of the whole of nature. We do not only understand the loss of rainforests and their unique floras and faunas, we also recognise that tribal cultures are being destroyed. It is not only that finite resources are being consumed at an alarming pace, but also that people's lives are being exhausted, their needs and their dreams ignored.

So, as Christians, we should have a solidarity with the poor and should oppose poverty. We are mindful of Jesus' words: 'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full' (John 10:10).

Sallie McFague asks if there can be an ecological answer to Jesus' question: 'Who do you say that I am?' (Mark 8:29).<sup>14</sup> She believes that eschatological Christologies that look to renewal and a resurrected creation address the despair of a deteriorating world, and that Jesus' ministry to the oppressed can be extended to nature, which she sees as the 'new poor'. She maintains that, 'If the Redeemer is the Creator, then surely God cares also for the other ninety-nine percent of creation, not just the one percent (actually, less than one percent) that humans constitute'.<sup>15</sup> She says that, 'our consumer culture defines the 'dominant life' as one in which "natural resources" are sacrificed for human profit and pleasure and "human resources" are the employees who will work for the lowest wages'.<sup>16</sup> But God with us suggests the range and promise of divine concern. Sacramental Christology is the embodiment of God in creation, as well as the hope of new creation. Therefore justice, rights, care and concern should be extended to the natural world.

The whole of creation is brought back into wholeness through the Cross. We are drawn into the covenant community of God, humanity, and creation.

When we speak of stewardship we need to understand this in terms of God working through us, rather than of God as an absentee landlord. Stewardship can be understood in terms of: being made in the image of

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>14</sup> Sallie McFague, 'An Ecological Christology. Does Christianity have it?' in Richard Foltz, ed., *Worldviews, Religion, and the Environment. A Global Anthology* (Belmont CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2003), p. 334.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 337.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 337.

God; being redeemed in Christ; and becoming children of God in the power of the Spirit.

Christians have a contribution to make. God created and entrusted the earth, and will redeem the whole of creation (Rom.8:19-21):

The creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

In Christ there is a new creation, but as ever in the New Testament, there is a now but not yet aspect. There are the first fruits of the Spirit, but still creation groans as it waits for God's human creatures to reach their perfect humanity (Romans 8:18-23). To believe in Christ in this world is to believe against reality – Christ is risen, but we live in a world of suffering, pain and destruction. It is hope, because now we see salvation for all creation only appearing in outline. But this cannot be a cheap hope; human beings must act in hope – the Spirit gives us the possibility to be what we are to become – the children of God. We find the same message in Colossians 1:15-20; note verses 19-20:

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Creation is brought back into relationship with God through the cross. This takes place as human beings find their restored relationship with the Creator, through the cross. God is deeply and passionately involved in his world; God is no absentee landlord, but indwelling, accompanying, incarnate, and present as Holy Spirit. There are important implications for our relationship both with the Creator and with his creation.

#### **4. Reflections on covenant breaking from the Book of Revelation**

Paula Clifford explores the current environmental crisis through the letters to the seven churches in the Book of Revelation.<sup>17</sup> She considers examples of the impact of global climate change on the disadvantaged and vulnerable peoples of the developing world. She urges the Church to express its prophetic voice, to be repentant of its part in ecological violence, and to act together to bring about redemption. Amongst her parallels with the seven churches she sees the Church in the West as being lukewarm on climate

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<sup>17</sup> Paula Clifford, *Angels with Trumpets. The church in a time of global warming* (London: Christian Aid and London: DLT, 2009).

change (letter to the church at Laodicea, Revelation 3.14-22), and failing to recognise the resultant injustice for the poor who are unable to protect themselves against climate change.

She draws attention to the horror of environmental destruction portrayed in Revelation chapter 16, which is echoed in Simon Woodman's exploration of Revelation.<sup>18</sup> Woodman suggests that:

it is in the images of warning judgment that John depicts the desolation of the created order along with humanity itself. Environmental damage and human suffering are presented as inseparable partners. In the sequences of seals, trumpets and bowls, John depicts scenes of environmental devastation with increasing intensity. The opening of the sixth seal triggers the shaking of the entire cosmos, with a great earthquake, the darkening of sun and moon, stars falling to the earth, the sky being rolled away, and every mountain and island being displaced (Rev. 6.12-14). The sounding of the trumpets leads to the burning away of a third of the earth, trees, and all green grass, the death of a third of all sea creatures, the poisoning of the earth's waters, and the darkening of a third of the sun, moon and stars (Rev. 8.7-12). The pouring out of the bowls triggers the death of every living thing in the sea, the poisoning of all waters, burning from an intensified sun, and a time of darkness (Rev. 16.2-12).<sup>19</sup>

There is a powerful ecological parable here. Woodman concludes that these visions of environmental destruction are interspersed with scenes of judgment on humanity, with the entire created order depicted as suffering the effects of humanity's rejection of God.

He draws on the work of Bauckham, who observes that in John's own time, the Syrian Elephant was hunted to near-extinction to supply the trade in carved ivory,<sup>20</sup> and Howard-Brook and Gwyther who note that the Roman system of *latifundia*<sup>21</sup> pressurised land into non-productivity through intensive farming, as well as forcing peasant farmers to the brink of starvation.<sup>22</sup> This situation was so severe that Pliny the Elder (23-79 CE) commented on these large-scale farms: '[W]e must confess the truth, it is

<sup>18</sup> Simon Woodman, *The Book of Revelation. SCM Core Text* (London: SCM, 2008).

<sup>19</sup> Simon Woodman, 'Can the book of Revelation be a gospel for the environment?' in M J Coomber, ed., *Bible and Justice: Ancient Texts, Modern Challenges* (London: Equinox Publishing Ltd, 2010), pp. 179-195.

<sup>20</sup> R. Bauckham, 'The New Teaching on the Environment: A Response' in R.C.J. Carling and M.A. Carling, eds., *A Christian Approach to the Environment* (London: The John Ray Initiative, 2005), p. 99.

<sup>21</sup> *Latifundia* – the development of large estates with an industrial approach to both arable and pastoral farming, which were designed to work the land for the greatest profit.

<sup>22</sup> W. Howard-Brook and A. Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now* (New York: Orbis, 2001), p. 248.

the wide-spread domains [*latifundia*] that have been the ruin of Italy, and soon will be that of the provinces as well'.<sup>23</sup>

Woodman observes that empires which take dominion over the earth frequently engage in ecological violence. He notes that the environmental judgments of Revelation are not personally targeted punishments aimed at those who deny the lordship of Christ, but rather are images evoking the inevitable end-results of the human capacity for empire and exploitation. He expresses the same thoughts as Paula Clifford that the environmental call of Revelation is therefore for the Church to discover its vocation as witness to an alternative, non-exploitative expression of humanity, focused around the lordship of the one on the heavenly throne.<sup>24</sup> However, any such activity will always be perceived as a direct challenge to the idolatrous claims exercised by the satanic empire of Babylon in all its forms, something that inevitably places the Church at odds with the dominant powers of the creation-destroying empires of earth, whether self-serving governments or profit-making global corporations.

John offers his theological assertion that systems of oppression and destruction will themselves ultimately face judgment, something which he vividly depicts in the vision of the destruction of the great whore and the great city (Revelation 17-18).<sup>25</sup>

This is where the breaking of covenant inevitably leads, but Woodman maintains that John also presents a positive role for creation. John evokes the Noahic covenant, recalling God's promise to remain faithful to creation in his description of the rainbow around the divine throne (Rev. 4.3; cf. Ezek. 1.28; Gen. 9.13-16), and the whole of creation is seen to participate in the offering of worship to the one seated on the divine throne (Rev. 5.13; cf. Phil. 2.10).<sup>26</sup>

The Book of Revelation ends with the vision of a new heaven and a new earth, where the effects of the Fall are reversed, the covenant ultimately restored, and the whole cosmos comes under the justice of the Lord who sits on the heavenly throne.

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<sup>23</sup> Woodman in Coomber, *Bible and Justice*.

<sup>24</sup> Woodman, *The Book of Revelation*, pp. 209-12.

<sup>25</sup> Woodman in Coomber, *Bible and Justice*.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

## C. Covenant Restoration

### 1. Justice, power and exploitation

There are clear questions of justice, when we consider pollution, exhaustion of natural resources and the inequality of the availability of creation's gifts. Gustavo Gutierrez distinguishes three meanings of poverty: i) material poverty – the lack of economic goods which are necessary for life; ii) spiritual poverty; and iii) a biblical understanding that recognises that poverty contradicts the meaning of the Mosaic covenant and the Christian Gospel, which is to give people dignity.<sup>27</sup> There must be the elimination of exploitation and poverty that prevents the poor from being fully human. So Christians should have a solidarity with the poor and should oppose poverty. A key text is the Jubilee manifesto of Luke 4:18-19.

Technological pragmatism has led and is still leading human beings to mistreat the planet and individual lives. Ecology has brought to light the unforeseen effects that human interference with natural processes often has; and this is why we can no longer plead inadvertence as the excuse for technological excess. Ruth Conway notes that 'we are part of a world frantically pushing at technological frontiers ... we are also part of a world whose technologies are threatening the very basis of life.'<sup>28</sup> She believes that our human-centred culture is in the grip of a technological power that is out of control.<sup>29</sup>

But as Leonardo Boff says, human beings are not simply hungry animals in need of food – satisfied through 'technological messianism' – they must be able to participate through creativity, to feed themselves.<sup>30</sup> For Boff, science, technology and power can be part of a programme of redemption, construction, consolidation, and expansion of human life and freedom, which starts with those who have the least life and freedom.<sup>31</sup> It is the ways in which we use our scientific and technological understanding that is of prime importance.

Paula Clifford<sup>32</sup> believes that it is important to move away from a problem-solving approach to global climate change and recognise that we have to live with climate change. Understanding that this is a global problem necessitates, I believe, a global approach. The Christian Church is

<sup>27</sup> Robert McAfee Brown, *Gustavo Gutierrez - An Introduction to Liberation Theology* (New York: Orbis, 1990), pp. 56-57.

<sup>28</sup> Ruth Conway, *Choices at the Heart of Technology. A Christian Perspective* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press, 1999), p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> Conway, *Choices*, p. 4.

<sup>30</sup> Leonardo Boff, 'Science, Technology, Power and Liberation Theology' in Foltz, *Worldviews*, p. 500.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 503.

<sup>32</sup> Clifford, *Angels with Trumpets*, pp. 112-131.

a worldwide community making up some one third of the world's population and as such is in a unique position to take up the challenge of restoring and renewing creation. Hope comes through a change of lifestyle as a mark of Christian discipleship – being the new covenant community in Christ.

## 2. Ethical discipleship

Covenant restoration begins with ethical discipleship, through which mission is recognised as the praxis of faith, the activity and theological reflection upon that activity as characteristic of Christ-like discipleship. Our theology and worship give us the prophetic words to proclaim and a recognition that obedience to God can be summed up in the words of the prophet Micah, who says in answer to the question, 'With what shall I come before the Lord?', 'He has shown all you people what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.' (Micah 6:6-8)

God's covenant with Noah marks a new beginning after the flood. Bernard W. Anderson points out that this is 'fundamentally an ecological covenant that includes not only human beings everywhere but all animals – "every living being [*nepeš hayyâ*]" ... [and] the earth itself'.<sup>33</sup> He also emphasises that this is an 'everlasting covenant' or a 'covenant in perpetuity' which shows 'God's absolute commitment to the creation'.<sup>34</sup> This is a covenant that neither sets restrictions to the species nor limits on time. It is inclusive for all time, and is recognised in the redemption that comes in Christ.

Non-human creation, as depicted in the Bible, has a role in giving glory to God and in teaching human beings about God's ways (Ps 19.1; Proverbs 6.6; Ps 104.10-1). The Apostle Paul tells us how the whole creation is groaning and waiting to be set free to share the 'freedom of the glory of the children of God' (Rom 8.21). Paul Fiddes argues that although these are poetic images they bear testimony to some kind of response which the natural world can make or fail to make to the purposes of God, a response which in some way is connected to the human response.<sup>35</sup> The call of Christ is expressed as 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me' (Mark 8.34).

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<sup>33</sup> Bernhard W. Anderson, *From Creation to New Creation: Old Testament Perspectives* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), p. 156, quoted in Helle Liht, *Restoring relationships: Towards Ecologically Responsible Baptist Communities in Estonia* (unpublished MTh thesis, IBTS: Prague, 2008).

<sup>34</sup> Anderson, *From Creation to New Creation*, pp. 156-158.

<sup>35</sup> Paul S. Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces: Baptist Identity in Church and Theology* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003), p. 56.

This is a different sort of life, a Christ-like life, a life that is *ἐν Χριστῷ*. It is to deny self – move away from a selfish materialistic life style; take up the cross-shaped life of sacrificial love – sharing God's good gifts of creation with all; and follow Jesus – in his compassion for others and for the world. The call is to join in Christ's redemptive mission.

So to be involved in Christ's redemptive mission – for Christ's redeeming love to flow through us, in the power of the Spirit we must:

- *Deny self*: live more simply, use less of the world's resources; treat the created order with care.
- *Take up the cross*: live sacrificially for the sake of others; give up our greed; sacrifice our wants.
- *Follow Jesus*: see the created world as an expression of God's order and love; see everyone as equally valued by God; take special care of the poor and the outcast; and love our neighbour as ourselves.

Humans must make connections between the love of God which sustains them, the call of God to love neighbour, the care of the environment, and the worship of God. Moltmann brings together the creation, God's act in the past; and the redeemed created order, God's future that was inaugurated by Christ's resurrection. He argues that according to the understanding of the New Testament, Christ's death and resurrection carry historic, eschatological and cosmic dimension. This is the new covenant. Moltmann says:

There can be no redemption for human beings without the redemption of the whole of perishable nature. So it is not enough to see Christ's resurrection merely as 'God's eschatological act in history'. We also have to understand it as *the first act in the new creation of the world*. Christ's resurrection is not just a historical event. It is a cosmic event too.<sup>36</sup>

Paul places the redemption of human beings in the context of the redemption of the whole creation which is powerfully expressed in Paul's letter to the Romans (8.18-25).

## D. Conclusion

In looking at genetic engineering Celia Deane-Drummond asks, 'How far should we be allowed to become co-creators with God in engineering crops

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<sup>36</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, 1995, *Jesus Christ for today's world* (London: SCM Press, 1995) p. 83, quoted in Liht, *Restoring relationships*, pp. 38-41.

and animals for our own benefit? ..... How do we distinguish one research project from another in terms of its likely risk and benefit for humanity and the earth?' She suggests that 'a theology of Wisdom serves to unite themes of creation and redemption by identifying Christ the Redeemer and the divine Logos with Sophia, the Wisdom of God involved in the creation of the world.'<sup>37</sup> Key to the argument that she rehearses is the wisdom to recognise the presence of God in the new technologies. There are key questions to which we need answers: are we achieving God's purposes? Do we know what God intends? Are we excluding God from our discussions?<sup>38</sup> She concludes that it would be naïve to suggest that we can go back to an agrarian culture in ignorance of modern technology. However, she rightly suggests that too great a focus on human achievement and human freedom obscures other theological principles, such as the mandate to give proper respect to the living world.<sup>39</sup>

She rightly remarks that 'Wisdom is helpful in that it does not deny reason or deny science its place, but it puts it in a wider context of social justice, prudence and temperance', which are much needed in what is often a heated debate.<sup>40</sup>

I believe that an exploration of human beings as both channels of God's creativity and participators in Christ's redemptive mission through the power of the Spirit – our involvement in God's covenant with creation – helps to address these issues. It is the restoration of our covenant relationship in Christ that will see the possibilities of creation care, and an addressing of human induced climate change (Romans 8:18-25). Ethical discipleship, addressing creation care, flows from the restoration of our covenant relationship in Christ, through which Christians collectively demonstrate a redeemed humanity turning from exploitation of earth's resources to creation care.

It will be through the activities of covenant-keepers and Sabbath-keepers that the effects of climate change can be addressed.

**Dr John Weaver**, Principal, South Wales Baptist College.

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<sup>37</sup> Celia E. Deane-Drummond, 2001, *Biology and Theology Today. Exploring the Boundaries* (London: SCM, 2001), pp. 94-5.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 98-9.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.



## Book Reviews

### *Theological Interpretation of Culture in Post-Communist Context: Central and East European Search for Roots*

Ivana Noble

Ashgate, 2010, 230 pages, ISBN 978-1-4094-0007-3

One of the foci of this Journal is to encourage the development of theological thought arising from, and directed towards, Europe's post-communist context. Ivana Noble's project in *Theological Interpretation* has a similar ground and aim. The way this reflection is carried forward is by exploring the symbols inhabiting certain representative pieces of Central and East European literature, music and film.

For Noble, as a Central European theologian, such an investigation leads to a dialogue between the longings expressed by post-Communist culture and major tenets of Christian theology. She seeks to demonstrate how, in this process, both theology and culture are mutually enhanced.

Theological conversations with people who do not have a direct relationship with the Christian tradition means that one is invited to start from searching for the good in the world in the hope of eventually finding the goodness of God as links are traced between contemporary cultural expressions and Christian theology. Theological resources which Noble finds helpful come both from East and West, thereby also demonstrating their own need for mutual enrichment.

Noble's discussion of the yearnings of culture is carried forward in the shape of Trinitarian theology as she explores the themes of World, Memory and Ultimate Fulfilment. The first part of the book explores the way culture understands the world through the literary work of two writers, a Czech, Karel Čapek, and a Polish Jew writing from the USA, Isaac Bashevis Singer. The world as they see it, Noble suggests, is marked by expressions of both evil and a hopeful sense of goodness of life. In these two writers and in the explorations of other examples in the remainder of the book, Noble conveys a deep conviction that all that is good can be embraced by a Christian theologian trying to make sense of the created world.

Discussion then moves to the question of memory which this world possesses: a difficult subject in the East and Central European experience where the terrors of the totalitarian regimes were marked by many shades of grey next to the black and white. Here Noble introduces the poem-songs

of two artists: a Russian, Vladimir Vysotsky, and a Czech, Jaromír Nohavica, and brings them into the discussion on how memory is redeemed and how, in the process of that redemption, those who have been repressed and suffered can experience liberation.

The final part of the book looks at how post-Communist cultures understand ultimate fulfilment. Three film directors are taken as partners in this reflection: a Hungarian, István Szabó, a Czech, Vladimír Michálek, and a Pole, Krzysztof Kieślowski. Noble highlights the intrinsically relational nature of fulfilment and the complex ways in which humans arrive at it. She underlines the possibility of glimpsing God without knowing it, such as in the workings of the Spirit which can be present in the lives and culture of those for who God is largely viewed with suspicion, if not completely rejected.

One of the lessons of this book is that theology can be helped from learning about its own dead ends and harmful outcomes as reflected in post-Communist culture's uneasy relationship with its Christian roots. At the same time, when done appropriately, it can speak powerfully into a secular world attempting to live without God.

How does one convey the mood and the spirit of a song, or summarise the depth of a story, or present a film? This is where Noble's project is both fascinating and challenging in endeavouring to describe things which are meant to be seen, listened to, or read. In some way, *Theological Interpretation* is a guide and an invitation to a direct encounter with the works Noble explores. It also invites a similar approach to other artefacts we might meet on our way – in Central and Eastern Europe or elsewhere.

**Lina Andronovienė**  
Course Leader, IBTS, Prague

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*The Gospel Among the Nations: A Documentary History of Inculturation*

Edited and Introduced by Robert A. Hunt

Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, 2010, xiv + 288 pages  
ISBN 978-1-57075-874-4

In 1990 Orbis published a book edited by Alfred Hennelly entitled *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History*. This book performs a broadly similar and equally valuable task for mission, broadly understood

as ‘the ways Christians have engaged and can engage a pluralistic world with the gospel’ (p.xi). Robert Hunt from the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University in Dallas provides an initial essay (Part One) and then furnishes helpful introductions to the various documents and extracts he has chosen.

The opening essay, consisting of four chapters, offers an admirably succinct overview of the development of mission, and its current tasks and challenges. Hunt stresses the post-colonial element in mission, which is in keeping with other contemporary missiological writing, but is likely to prove rather dated in the near future. One might also have expected to find some more direct attempt to define what he understands by ‘inculturation’, given that the book seeks to offer a documentary history of this phenomenon.

Part Two consists of five chapters, again following a broadly chronological approach. The first (Chapter 5) contains some pre-Constantinian sources, whilst Chapter 6 consists of documents from the fourth to sixth century. Particularly useful here is the collection in one place of translations of important documents or excerpts from the history of world Christianity, including the Armenian Church, and a translation of the well-known Xi’an stele, to name just two.

The next chapter contains extracts from works looking at the contact between European Christianity and Asia and Africa in the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries. Of particular interest to readers of *JEBS* is the inclusion in this section of a fairly generous extract from William Carey’s *An Enquiry*, though Carey is not identified as a Baptist. Chapter 8 concerns mainly late nineteenth and early twentieth century mission in colonial contexts. It is good to see here a fairly full treatment of the Orthodox mission in Alaska, one of the few active Orthodox missions of the period. There are also the first documents from outside the western world looking critically at European and north American missions. The final chapter looks at mostly more recent mission documents from Roman Catholic, Orthodox, World Council of Churches and Evangelical sources. Again, perhaps the most useful part of this section is its inclusion of a wide range of Orthodox material, which is often less well-known and less accessible.

Although the book is written in double-column format (which makes it not always so easy to read), there is obviously a limit to what can be put in, and therefore it is not hard to point to some lacunae. From our perspective here at IBTS, I think we would miss any acknowledgement of the existence of Anabaptists, let alone their missionary endeavours. This is partly due to the insistence of understanding mission in terms of engagement with another different world, which rules out any consideration

of the need for inculturation in one's own setting, something which is not quite as self-evident as might be assumed.

Nevertheless, having said all that, this is an extremely valuable resource which is likely to find a place on library and student bookshelves around the world. It brings together much that is important, and some that is, if not unknown, at least less well-known than it should be. As such it serves admirably its purpose of being a source book to turn to for information on the God-inspired journey of the Good News around the world, as well as pointing to some of the problems that have attended that journey. This book will remain an invaluable companion for many years to come.

**Tim Noble**  
Course Leader, IBTS, Prague